

The
Melville Society
N E W S L E T T E R

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The secretary will spend a good part of the summer (mainly July and August) in New York and New England on the trail of materials for a fully documented biography of Melville. He hopes to see at least a few of our members on his way. During the first part of July he may be reached at 7-13 Washington Square North, New York 3, N. Y. Later in the month letters addressed in care of the Houghton Mifflin Company, 2 Park Street, Boston 7, will reach him. He will return to Colorado around the first of September.

Hans Helmcke of Wiesbaden, Germany, will publish during the coming year a condensed version of his doctoral study (Mainz University, 1955,) on "*Die Funktion des Ich-Erzählers in Herman Melvilles Roman Moby Dick.*" Only a few copies are now available in university libraries. The study contains (1) an introduction, in which Helmcke discusses ways in which the first-person narrator may be used in a novel and how his position can be traced in detail throughout the text; (2) an analytical section dealing with "forecastle Ishmael," the narrator speaking in the first person singular, the narrator speaking in the first person plural, the different forms of address, the impersonal forms in the third person, the storyteller's omniscient point of view, the monologues, etc.; and (3) a synthesis that sums up the relationship between "forecastle Ishmael" and the actual narrator and points out important discrepancies. The study identifies three essential characters in the person of the storyteller and, in consequence, three different parts of the story. In an appendix Helmcke considers Melville's use of the "I-narrator" in earlier works. Publication of the condensed version, of course, will be in German.

It is reported that new tie clasps for men, with small figures of sperm whales carved from whale ivory and mounted on gold, are now being sold in some of the New England department stores. Presumably the design is inspired by publicity for the John Huston motion picture, *Moby Dick*.

Miss Jutta Willibald, a German student working under John O. McCormick at the Free University of Berlin, will ex-

amine Melville's reputation in both France and Germany.

Correction: In the last issue Stanley T. Williams was reported to have died in January. The exact date of his death was February 4.

A number of members have suggested the possibility of preparing a memorial volume of studies for Stanley Williams, with essays and research reports on American Literature contributed by his former students. The Yale University Press, logical publisher of such a volume, has adopted, however, a firm policy against all memorial collections of this kind. Its advice is that the project be abandoned.

Joseph Sittler of the Chicago Lutheran Theological Seminary writes that "every fly in the 1956 theological ointment" was seen by Melville a hundred years ago. Here is the germ of what might very well prove an interesting and rewarding doctoral study.

The Dell Publishing Company of New York has recently issued in its popular "Movie Classic" series a comic book (No. 717) based upon the motion picture, *Moby Dick*, and containing photographs of Gregory Peck in the role of Ahab.

The *Aurora Zanichelli* of Turin, Italy, plans to edit and publish a monographic encyclopedia of literature, one section of which will discuss the fifty most important literary works of all time. One of the fifty (presumably no member will feel any surprise at this) is *Moby Dick*. The secretary has been asked to supply some of the necessary information and has done so.

Gil Wilson, well known artist and honorary member of the Society, has donated to the Society two of his interesting original paintings. The two are entitled *Ahab* and *Queequeg*, respectively. The series of which these once formed a part has aroused considerable interest in both artistic and literary circles throughout the country. The two pictures were placed on display at Northwestern University by Harrison Hayford in an exhibit of Melville materials during February. The executive committee of the Society is now considering plans for use or disposal (for profit) of the paintings. Wil-

son, in making the gift, suggested either a lottery or direct sale to raise funds for the work of the Society. Many members, however, appear to believe that the Society should retain possession and use the pictures for educational purposes. One proposal is to place them for safe-keeping in the Melville Room at Pittsfield, exhibiting them from time to time in other cities. Wilson is also presenting to the Society a full set of the colored slides made from his illustrations of *Moby-Dick*.

Ernst Edmund Keil of Bonn University, Germany, working under the supervision of Ernest E. Leisy, has begun a study of Melville's reputation and influence in Germany, Austria, and Switzerland.

Charles Brown reports the publication (about 1953) of a translation into Hebrew of *Moby-Dick*. Publisher: the Newman Publishing House of Tel Aviv, Israel. The Rockwell Kent illustrations are used.

Of incidental interest to Melville enthusiasts: Ivan T. Sanderson, *Follow the Whale* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1956). Price, \$6.00. This has more information about whales and the history of whaling than most books on the subjects.

Mrs. Charlotte Mangold, doing her work in the department of German at the University of Maryland, is now completing a dissertation on Melville's reception by the German critics of the twentieth century.

A paper-bound edition of *Moby-Dick*, edited by Alfred Kazin, will be published this year (spring or summer) by the Houghton Mifflin Company of Boston among its Riverside Editions, a new series.

In the *Coronet* magazine for January, 1956, a familiar passage from Melville is used as the text for a literary exercise under the title, "Sharpen Your Word Sense!" The test was prepared by Roger B. Goodman (p. 77).

✓ This *Week* magazine for November 13, 1955, contains some slightly inaccurate, though highly interesting, information about Melville in Bennett Cerf's widely read column, "The Cerfboard." This *Week* appears with Sunday editions of the New York *Herald Tribune* and other newspapers.

✓ The popular singer, Frankie Lane, sings a "ballad" about Moby Dick the White Whale on a recent recording. (Those interested in this kind of thing should have no difficulty in ascertaining the details!)

✓ Should the title of Melville's best known work be spelled with or without the hyphen? Opinions and practices vary with regard to this detail. Melville hyphenated the name of his whale on the title page but not elsewhere in the book. Some scholars of today appear acutely unhappy when students or publishers forget the hyphen entirely. The solution seems to be: Take your choice. Following Melville's practice, the editor of the *Newsletter* prefers to spell the title of the book with a hyphen and will continue to write and print it as *Moby-Dick*.

✓ The world premiere of *Moby Dick*, John Huston's new motion picture starring Gregory Peck and a rubber whale, will be held at New Bedford, Massachusetts, on June 27. Members of the Society were asked for and offered much free technical advice, some of which was used in producing the picture.

Dues may be forwarded at any time (\$2 active, \$1 associate). Notices are included with this issue for those whose checks for 1956 have not been received. News about the activities of our members, brief notes, and Melville items of all kinds are needed for future issues of the *Newsletter*.

The Modern Language Association this year will meet in Washington, D. C. No announcement has been made as yet regarding the possibility of an annual meeting of the Society. Presumably it will be held as usual in conjunction with the M. L. A.

THE *Melville Society* NEWSLETTER

IS PUBLISHED QUARTERLY FOR MEMBERS OF THE

Melville Society, a group of literary scholars and others interested in the life and works of Herman Melville. The Society seeks to facilitate the exchange of information among its members, to stimulate the study of Melville's life and works, and to encourage literary, historical, and bibliographical research. Membership is two dollars per year and includes all services of the Society. Associate membership (non-voting) is one dollar per year and includes all issues of the Newsletter. Address Tyrus Hillway, secretary, at Colorado State College, Greeley, Colorado.